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FREE MAGAZINE

# BC VOTES PROREP

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# Andrew Coyne chooses ProRep



*Andrew Coyne is national affairs columnist for the National Post. Raised in Winnipeg, Mr. Coyne is a graduate of the University of Toronto and the London School of Economics. He has previously worked for Maclean's magazine, the National Post and the Globe*

*and Mail, contributing as well to a wide range of other publications in Canada and abroad, including the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, National Review, Time, Saturday Night, and the Walrus. He is also a weekly panelist on the CBC nightly news program The National.*

**T**he problem is that our democracy is not working as it should. We have a first-past-the-post (FPTP) system that was built for two-party politics. But we no longer have two-party politics. Result:

- It *misrepresents* voters' true preferences.
- It *discriminates* against some voters, leaving others unrepresented.
- It *denies* some voters the right to vote for the party of their choice.
- The *politics* it encourages is corrosive, divisive, and driven by a winner-take-all mentality.
- The *parliaments* it elects present a distorted picture of the country, greatly exaggerating and exacerbating our differences.

The governments FPTP produces alternate between unstable minorities and wildly unrepresentative majorities. In sum, we do not live under the system we think we do.

We have the form of a parliamentary democracy, but in several respects not the substance.

## What are the defining characteristics of democracy?

**First: A system of majority rule.** But ours is not such a system. In fact, it is a system of institutionalized minority rule. It only takes a plurality in each riding for a member to be elected. And it doesn't even take a plurality for a party to form a government; governments are elected to "majority" governments not just with fewer votes than 50 percent – fewer even than 40 percent – but fewer votes than their nearest rivals.

This is not a trivial objection! Systems in which a minority rule over a majority are rightly denounced as tyrannies. Yet time and time again we elect governments that impose policies that are opposed by the majority.

Majority rule is ingrained in us. Try this thought experiment: suppose a minority of the Members of Parliament or the provincial legislature, say 39 percent, tried to pass legislation over the objections of the majority. There'd be riots. But there's no particular significance to a majority of the men and women who happen to be sitting in that chamber. It's only because they are

supposed to represent the people. But if we'd object to a minority of MPs passing legislation, why would we not similarly object to MPs representing only a minority of the people doing so?

Yet that is happens, every day. We preserve the form of majority rule while ignoring it in substantive terms.

**Second: A system in which everyone gets a vote and**

Liberal MP in the last election. By contrast, it took 57,000 votes to elect each Conservative; 79,000 to elect each New Democrat; 82,000 to elect each member of the Bloc Québécois. And, of course, the nearly 603,000 people who voted Green were rewarded with exactly one seat. And this was one of the less distorted recent results! In the 1993 election, you'll recall, the Conservatives, with

## First Past The Post

**WARNING:**  
HAZARDOUS TO  
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ELECTORAL OUTCOME.  
KNOWN TO BE ADDICT-  
IVE TO PARTY BOSSES,  
CRONIES & LOBBYISTS.  
PROLONGED USE MAY  
LEAD TO CANCER OF  
THE DEMOCRACY.



**The governments FPTP produces alternate between unstable minorities and wildly unrepresentative majorities.**

16 percent of the vote, were reduced to a humiliating two seats. Meanwhile, the Bloc surged to 54 seats on the strength of... 13.5 percent of the vote, while the Reform Party, with less than 19 percent of the vote, got 51 seats.

The issue here is not fairness between the parties. Rather, it is the unequal treatment of different voters that represents a fundamental breach of the democratic promise. Nor are the inequities of first-past-the-post randomly distributed. Because only the candidate with the most votes in each riding is

*continued p.5...*

every vote is equal. But again, that does not describe our current FPTP system. The system is rightly called "winner take all." Because we elect just one member per riding, the winning party and its supporters are awarded 100% of the representation. But they didn't get 100% of the vote. In most cases, they got 40% or less; sometimes less than 30%. Aggregate that distortion across all the ridings and the number of seats a party gets bears no relationship to the number of votes it got.

Another way of saying it is that the weight of each vote varies wildly. Rather than every vote counting equally, some votes count for a lot more than others. At the riding level, some voters get their views represented in Parliament; others do not. Legally, they are all "represented," in the sense that they have a member of Parliament. But they don't get their *views* represented. (If it didn't matter what their views were we wouldn't have elections.) In the aggregate, the result is it takes many more votes to elect MPs from some parties than others.

For example, it took roughly 38,000 votes to elect each

# common ground

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## Time to say goodbye

After more than a 20-year involvement with Common Ground, it is with mixed feelings that I advise this will be my last issue as managing editor. It is time to pass the torch, and I eagerly anticipate spending even more time with my three-year-old granddaughter!

I am very grateful to publisher Joseph Roberts for providing me the opportunity to work for a publication that has stood unwaveringly for truth and justice since 1982!

Now, more than ever, in the face of widespread, hidden corporate and political agendas, independent media is so vitally important and I encourage you to support Common Ground in any way you can.

Please continue to email editor@commonground.ca and Ahmed Lelamo will respond to your queries.

All the best,  
Sonya Weir

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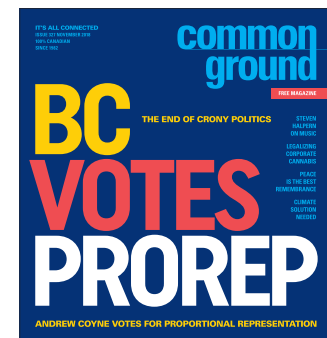
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...Andrew Coyne *ProRep* from pg. 3

elected, first-past-the-post disproportionately rewards parties that can bunch their votes geographically. So parties that take an aggressively regional approach, like the Bloc Quebecois, typically benefit, at the expense of parties with a broader national outlook.

Election after election, the Bloc was allowed to pose as the voice of Quebec, though it never, ever, won a majority of the vote there. At one point, they even formed the Official Opposition. The system takes our existing regional differences, and exaggerates them.

This isn't just a problem of avowedly regional parties: our national parties aren't really national either, not at least in how they are represented in Parliament. Parties will typically be shut out of whole regions of the country, though they may have a quarter or more of the vote: the Liberals in the west, or the Tories in Quebec.

In 35 elections since 1896, the Conservatives have only carried Quebec three times: most elections, they have struggled to win more than a handful of seats. That record of futility is mirrored by the Liberals in the West, where they last won a majority of the seats in 1949: again, as often as not they have been held to single digits.

To look at the electoral map, you'd think there were no Tories in Quebec, and no Liberals in the West. But, in fact, the Tories have averaged more than 25 percent of the vote in Quebec, the Liberals the same in the West, throughout their respective droughts. It's the electoral system, rather, that produces this funhouse image of



We have the form of one person,  
one vote, but not the substance,  
just as we have the form of majority  
rule but not the substance.  
But because the forms are  
maintained, we lose sight of how  
undemocratic the system really is.

Canada, since it rewards parties, not for "building the broadest possible coalitions," but for clumping their support geographically.

Again, there are real-world consequences to this. Does anyone think the Liberals would have brought in the National Energy Program if they'd had more than two seats in the West?

In some provincial elections, the same phenomenon can result in one party winning all of the seats, or nearly all, in the legislature. How does a legislature with only one party, with no opposition, fit anyone's definition of



democracy? Again, if ballots were issued to some voters but not others, or in packs of two or nine or 29 depending on which party you voted for and what riding you lived in, there'd be riots in the streets. We have the form of one person, one vote, but not the substance, just as we have the form of majority rule but not the substance. But because the forms are maintained, we lose sight of how undemocratic the system really is.

**Third: in a democracy, you get to vote for the party of your choice.** But in our system, people are constantly being told they can't vote for the party of their choice. Because only one MP from each riding gets elected, and because it only takes a plurality to win, voters live in constant fear of "splitting the vote" — letting the party favoured by the minority get in, because the majority was divided up amongst two or more parties.

So voters are herded into pens, told they must vote "strategically." How often have you been told you can't vote for the party you prefer, but must vote for a party you dislike, to prevent a party you detest from getting in? How often have you been told not to "waste" your vote on a party that can't win?

You'll know all about that if you live in one of the many "safe" ridings or indeed regions where the result is such a forgone conclusion it's hardly worth campaigning, or voting, as opposed to the "battleground" ridings, the ones the parties actually contest, where how you vote might actually matter. The notion that *every* riding ought to be a battleground, with parties competing hard for every vote everywhere, does not seem to occur to us.

But in any riding, half or more of the votes might as well be tossed in the trash: the ones cast for any but the winning candidate. No, the others' votes aren't "wasted" in the sense that they were legally cast and counted. But it is true in the sense that only the winning party's votes contribute to electing someone. Remember: first-past-the-post is a "winner take all" system.

But, of course, I'm only describing its effects on the election results. The real indictment of first-past-the-

post isn't so much what happens on election day, but what happens *every day in between*: in how we are governed, in the style of our politics. The electoral system is how we keep score; it sets out the rewards and penalties for different types of behaviour. If you change the scoring system, you change the way the players play the game. Ours is a highly *leveraged* system; two points in the polls can mean dozens of seats won or lost.

One consequence of a system of institutionalized minority rule is exaggerated swings in government policy, based on nothing but the luck of how the vote splits. In Ontario, for example, we swung from the David Peterson Liberals to Bob Rae's NDP to the Mike Harris Tories in the space of a few years, all based on the shift of a few percentage points in the popular vote. That's at election time. The same leverage often means prolonged periods of stasis

between elections, everyone hugging the middle, the status quo and each other rather than take any chances by, say, proposing new ideas.

At the same time, because a cohesive, motivated minority can prevail over a disparate majority, FPTP rewards the kind of narrow, nasty politics we've seen all too often, where the aim is to rile up your supporters,



The real indictment of first-past-the-post isn't so much what happens on election day, but what happens every day in between: in how we are governed, in the style of our politics

to impress upon them that they are a besieged minority who must stick together no matter what. And, increasingly, we're seeing it result in minority governments. That's not supposed to happen. FPTP is supposed to produce stable majority governments. That's true, under two-party systems. But we haven't had two party politics in Canada since 1917.

Once the mould is broken, it's very hard to put it back. Political identities are increasingly fluid. We're seeing more new parties, not fewer: the Bloc, the Greens, now Maxime Bernier's People's Party. Nine of the last 20 federal elections have resulted in hung parliaments. There are now seven parties represented in Parliament. Minorities at the provincial level are increasingly frequent. In recent years: Ontario, Quebec, BC, New Brunswick. Yet we keep treating it as if it were an aberration. One party or another will try and nerve its way through on sheer brinkmanship.

So the choice with FPTP is between unrepresentative "majorities" and unstable minorities. *continued p.9...*

# High rollers jump on pot bandwagon

by Bruce Mason

**F**ormer Canadian PM Brian Mulroney (1984-1993) jumped into legalized (sort-of) recreational weed with both Gucci loafers. He is among many former top politicians and police officers elbowing their way onto the ganga bandwagon. “It’s the way to go,” Mulroney opined with hypocritical zeal. “The way” for whom he did not elucidate, and didn’t really need to.

On October 17, as Bill C-45 – The Cannabis Act – became law, Mulroney was in the spotlight, making the talking-head, mainstream media rounds. Breaking news: he is now on the board of directors of Acreage Holdings – a New York-based marijuana company – alongside old pals John Boehner, former US Speaker of the House and William Weld, former governor of Massachusetts.

‘Lyn’ Brian’s pro-pot stance pivot requires a full and thorough body search for more than the half-million Canadians who have been busted for possession. They want an apology and their record expunged for a relatively harmless and victim-less crime. And for the hundreds of dispensaries that sprang up across Canada to get a foot in the door of Trudeau’s pot promises, now the domain of Big Pharma, Big Ag and Big Banks. And for the rapidly growing lucrative medicinal, health and extraction markets. And for innumerable grass entrepreneurs and tax-grabbing governments, worldwide. And for insight into how and why life is a bad-trip for so many, all over our endangered planet.

One wonders if Mulroney or other high-rollers will be stopped at the US border on their way to the White House or some grow-op board room. That’s a risk hundreds of thousand of other Canadians face.

Also in the line-up of newly minted marijuana evangelicals going for the green: Julian Fantino, former hard-line TO police chief and Harper’s veteran affairs minister. In stark contrast to Mulroney’s unsolicited “way to go” was Fantino’s admonishment in 2004, “We can’t go that way,” when asked if pot legalization would cut down on crime. “I guess we can legalize murder too and then we won’t have a murder case,” he explained, shortly after a Senate report recommended legalization.

More recently, our Julian confided that legal pot was “very big money” and that he was offered a chunk of it. “I would never do it,” insisted Fantino, now chairman of the board for Aleafia, a medicinal marijuana company.

Among many other strange Mary-Jane bedfellows is Liberal Herb Dhaliwal, who served in Jean Chrétien’s cabinet and founded cannabis producer National Green Biomed Ltd., based in the Fraser Valley.

The list of new corporate pot dealers goes on and on, up and up. Some former Health Canada officials, who



Brian Mulroney is among many former top politicians and police officers elbowing their way into the ganga trade.

helped draft the legal cannabis rules at the very institution responsible for granting production permits, are consultants. Ditto for the RCMP. In addition, major investors include former ministers or advisors, now labouring, lobbying and dealing for corporate pot. Turning over a new leaf in a once-in-a-lifetime emergence of a massively lucrative industry with global reach and ancillary markets worth untold billions. Monsanto, Loblaw and other corporate giants are signing supply contracts in drooling anticipation.



**Major investors include  
former ministers or advisors,  
now labouring, lobbying and  
dealing for corporate pot.**

As they say, fish rot from the head. And Mulroney is the big catch. His government introduced legislation to keep marijuana in the same legal category as heroin in the early ‘90s. But his thinking has “evolved.”

“It takes a while for certain people and certain things to catch up with reality... great social advances come in waves and this is one that I think will have Canada showing the way for the rest of the world,” said Mulroney, who’s been dubbed, “The jaw that walks like a man.”

“You know, if you had told me... when I was in office 30 years ago that same-sex marriage would be on everybody’s radar screen today, I would have said, ‘That’s a bit

of a stretch.’ But it is and that’s the way social advance occurs,” explained the most reviled prime minister in Canadian history.

Certain people? Social advances? Differing sexual orientation has been around since the dawn of humanity. Apparently, Louis Hébert sowed the first cannabis seeds in 1606, in what would later become Canada. Pot has been with us ever since – a massive underground black market that Stats Canada is finally trying to quantify on their StatsCannabis website to factor into Canada’s economy.

Mulroney’s mind-blowing, jaw-dropping conclusion: “In the fullness of time, all of these important matters become accepted.”


We have only 10 years of “fullness” to seriously act on important matters, such as climate disruption and obscene inequity and we can no longer wait for so-called leaders and greedy elites, lagging behind, addicted to money and power.

Mulroney once said, “I ain’t no shrinking violet” and “You cannot name a Canadian prime minister who has done as many significant things as I did because there are none.” Trump-like, for good reason. Mulroney, a Palm Beach neighbour of the US president, made 1,337 political appointments of friends and supporters and out-trumped even The Donald with single digit approval ratings.

The Justin-ification for Bill C-45 is tax revenue, keeping pot out of the hands of children and profits away from the likes of the Hells Angels. But more corporate pot sounds about as dumb and doomed as fighting climate change with more fossil fuels. This is not about getting high, or well. It is all about a few people getting richer and more powerful.

The *Canadian Medical Association Journal* warns of a “national, uncontrolled experiment in which the profits of cannabis producers and tax revenues are squarely pitched against the health of Canadians.”

BC’s Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General Mike Farnworth has news for the John and Jane Doe “Mom and Pop” pot shops down the street that invested their savings, filled out forms and are now waiting for a licence: “Community enforcement units will go into unlicensed cannabis stores without a warrant and levy administrative penalties, fines, to twice the value of the product that has been seized.”

As pot-smoking comedian George Carlin once observed, “They have a club and guess what? You and I aren’t in it.” The more things change, the more they stay the same. Canada’s patchwork pot laws are too little, too late, too corrupt and hypocritical. Roll us another one, Brian. 

Please email pot thoughts to [brucemason@shaw.ca](mailto:brucemason@shaw.ca)



# The recriminalization of cannabis

by Michael Bryant

Cannabis crime will go up, not down, now that cannabis has been “legalized” by the Trudeau government. Because the law that passed Parliament amounts to a recriminalization of cannabis possession, production and commercialization.

It takes a second or two to sink in, but once I say it, the response is universal: “Really? Does anyone know this? Why haven’t I heard this before?” The statement is shocking to everyone but criminal defence lawyers, apparently. I did a straw poll online of the Criminal Lawyers’ Association members: 85 percent agreed.

The prime minister and cabinet fully intended to legalize cannabis in 2018. No doubt about it. But the truth is that his justice minister has recriminalized pot to the point where I expect more, not less, cannabis criminal charges, post-“legalization.” As I submitted to a Senate committee last April, the bill lays a minefield of criminality best avoided without a platoon of lawyers. Parliament is legalizing the cannabis industry, but not the substance or its usage.

The Department of Justice (DOJ) is expert in criminal law. Codes, prosecutions, process, penalties, criminal courts, constitutional boundaries. It is less able on project management, technology, or anything that doesn’t belong in a courtroom. You wouldn’t want the DOJ to organize a Secret Santa exchange. There would be lots and lots and lots of rules, disqualifications, unworkable sanctions and a byzantine process for resolving everything. Ask the Department of Justice to manage pot legalization, and you get Bill C-45.

Meanwhile, Canadians imagine that cannabis will be *legal*... like coffee or vodka or orchids. *Leeeegal*. However, under this DOJ *doozie*, the front door of your humble abode can be separated from its hinges, by a federal-provincial vice squad (Project Leaf Blower!!), without a warrant, if they think a warrantless search is urgent.

Urgent? Search and seizure powers for police? This isn’t sounding like a legal substance. Worse still, your home, farm and all the agricultural equipment shall be forfeited to the state, just like the old illegal grow-ops or a contemporary meth lab, as proceeds of crime, if convicted. And

there are new, more punitive and wholly disproportionate maximum sentences for running afoul of Bill C-45. I know of no 14-year prison sentence arising from distribution of Smirnoff, let alone orchids.

Lest you think that these new criminal penalties are just going to gather dust, the feds invested an extra \$274 million to ensure they get enforced. Two-thirds of that money is earmarked for the new, draconian laws aimed at intoxicated driving (draconian because police can force you to blow or give blood without any reasonable cause or warrant), but with every officer that pulls someone over for a random drug test, an opportunity arises to shake down the vehicle for cannabis. The remaining \$100 million-plus goes to police for enforcing the law generally. That spells cannabis crackdown, to me. And that \$274 million was just a down payment. Municipalities, provinces and the RCMP have already demanded more and will likely get it by the next federal budget. Meanwhile, there is no corresponding investment provided to legal aid lawyers to defend people against these

new laws.

Be that as it may, legalization has launched a beautiful friendship between cannabis capitalism, retired police captains and government treasuries. The bill’s ugly underbelly, however, is the firm thumb under which the state keeps ’em down on the farm, as they say. Ex-cons and addicts find no relief in this bill, which rewards heretofore opponents of legalization with riches piled upon their taxpayer pensions, but nothing, nothing, nothing by way of new legal or economic opportunities for those punished by cannabis prohibition to date.

Those previously punished for trafficking and possessing cannabis are not filling the boardrooms of the cannabis industry. They cannot even get a job at the companies because people with criminal records are all but sentenced to a life of unemployment outside the low wage labour market (and even there, it’s a mighty struggle to find employers open to convicted applicants). We know that thanks to the great work done by the John Howard Society Ontario’s 2018 report,

[The] *Invisible Burden*.

So unless you’ve got a criminal law firm on speed-dial, you should wait. Wait before even thinking about growing your own, or setting up a little cottage cannabis soap and souvenir shop. Wait many moons after the bill becomes the law of Canada, after much legal advice has proliferated publicly, after your province has legislated and the federal regulations finally promulgated. *Caveat cannabis emptor ad infinitum.* ◀



This article was originally published in The Lawyer’s Daily ([www.thelawyersdaily.ca](http://www.thelawyersdaily.ca)), as part of LexisNexis Canada Inc. Michael Bry-

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# Coconut oil – a high-fibre whole food

**F**ew foods are at once maligned and acclaimed as much as coconut oil. Some see it as a notorious health villain, with an even greater concentration of saturated fat than butter or lard. It tops the list of foods to avoid in many heart-health programs. At the other end of the spectrum are those who view coconut oil as a fountain of youth, the greatest health discovery in decades, claiming it can provide therapeutic benefits for cancer, diabetes, digestive disturbances, heart disease, high blood pressure, HIV, kidney disease, osteoporosis and obesity. What is the truth? Is coconut oil a health menace or a miracle?

**Menace:** Its primary criticism is that over 80 percent of its fat is saturated and thus will increase blood cholesterol levels. The different saturated fats, with varying lengths of carbon chain, do affect cholesterol levels somewhat differently. Yet to reduce coronary artery disease risk, it's wise to limit saturated fat. The bottom line is that coconut oil increases LDL cholesterol and while its impact is less potent than butter, it still increases risk. Replacing saturated fats with polyunsaturated vegetable oils, and to a slightly lesser extent, monounsaturated (olive) oil, will produce far more favourable outcomes.

In many regions where coconut is a dietary staple, rates of chronic disease, including coronary artery disease, are low. Yet benefits seem to apply only when it is consumed along with a diet that is unprocessed and rich in high-fibre plant foods. In Western-style diets laden with white flour, sugar and fatty animal products, disease rates escalate with or without coconut and its products.

**Miracle:** Some fatty acids in coconut, (e.g. lauric acid), have significant antimicro-

bial properties. Virgin coconut oil also contains protective phytochemicals, including phenolic acids, though these are eliminated in refining. A plus for refined coconut oil is its stability; it is not easily oxidized or otherwise damaged. Plant foods that grow close to the equator have higher proportions of saturated fats to protect themselves from the ravages of oxidation that occurs in warm temperatures. In contrast, foods grown in cold climates, such as flax and hemp, generally contain valuable unsaturated fats such as omega-3 fatty acids. The plant needs certain fluids in it to remain liquid, even in very cold temperatures.

Including some whole plant foods that are high in saturated fat, such as coconut, may be beneficial as these are very stable, with a low risk of oxidation. While we want to keep our total intake of saturated fat low, complete elimination is neither advisable nor possible.

Coconut should be treated like other high-fat plant foods, enjoyed primarily as a whole food. It is loaded with fibre, vitamin E, healthful phytochemicals and powerful antimicrobial properties. Its oil can be viewed like other extracted oils: a food with many calories and relatively few nutrients. If you use extracted oils, your best bets are olive oil for stirfries and flaxseed or hempseed oils for salad dressings.

Base your diet on whole plant foods. For fats, rely on avocado, nuts, olives and seeds (pumpkin, sunflower, sesame, hemp, chia, ground flax). If you do use coconut oil, select organic, virgin options and keep your intake moderate. [K](#)

**Vesanto Melina and Brenda Davis** are BC-registered dietitians. See video and resources at [www.becomingvegan.ca](http://www.becomingvegan.ca) and [www.brendadavisrd.com](http://www.brendadavisrd.com)

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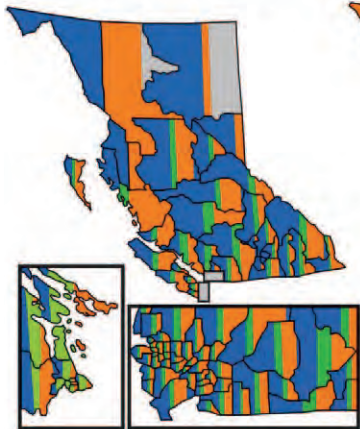


...Andrew Coyne Pro Rep from pg. 5

In sum, the present system allows the minority to rule over the majority. It gives some voters many times the voting power of others. It denies many voters the right to vote for the party of their choice, and wastes the votes of the rest. Oh, and it nearly killed the country a couple of times.

## The 2017 election...

### How BC Voted



### What BC Got



### There is an alternative

First of all, stipulate that no system of PR that is being proposed, or that is ever likely to be proposed in Canada, would ever do away with local representation. That *is*, indeed, the essence of our system. Here, rather, is the big, radical shift entailed under proportional representation. Here's what it all boils down to. Instead of one party getting 100 percent of the representation in each riding, you divide it up among the parties, in proportion to their share of the vote.

### Benefits of reform

Would this, as claimed by the FPTP side, mean "the end of majority governments"? No, it would mean the start. Under first-past-the-post, parties can win a majority of the seats with less than 40 percent of the vote: under proportional representation, a majority means a majority. It's just not necessarily a single-party majority. More typically, it's made up of coalitions of parties.

We associate "minority governments" with instability. But again, that's a product of our highly leveraged system. When two points in the polls make all the difference, everyone has their finger perpetually suspended over the button: We're up in the polls? Let's go: let's force an election. In a less leveraged system, when two percentage points in the polls only means two percent more seats, there's no point.

Rather than some votes counting for more than others, as under first-past-the-post, under PR every vote counts equally. Well, not every vote, but a whole lot closer to it. Rather than focus their efforts on a few "battleground" ridings, then, parties must campaign hard in every part of the country/province because every vote, or nearly so, helps to elect someone.

Under PR, voters who now trudge to the polls feeling the whole exercise is pointless because their candidate is unlikely to win, or switch their vote to some other party for fear of "splitting the vote," can vote for the party they actually prefer. No policy lurch. Make your gains by the earned increments of persuasion, not the accidents of split votes.

A stabler, more representative government.

### Concerns

The thing about fringe parties is that they're fringe. The reason so few Canadians vote for the Nazis isn't because we've rigged the electoral system to keep them out. It's because we don't like Nazis. We're Canadian! We don't vote for Nazis, we liberate Europe from them! The notion that just because you change the *continued p.15 ...*

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# BRANDS ‘R US

by Geoff Olson

Performing in the early nineties, the comic Bill Hicks offered some dubious advice to members of his audience. “By the way, if anyone here is in advertising or marketing... kill yourself. It’s just a little thought; I’m just trying to plant seeds.

“Seriously though, if you are, do.”

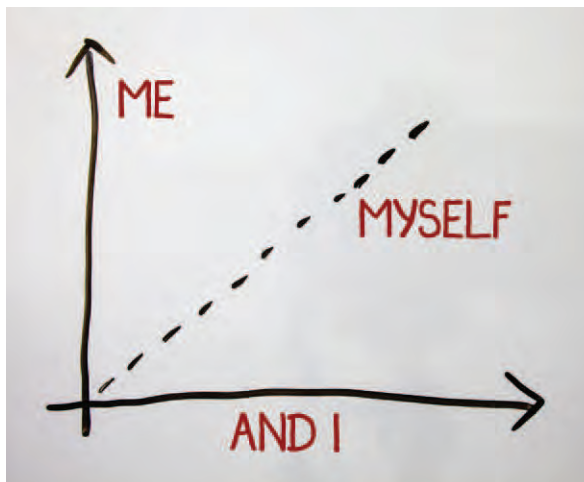
After describing his targets as “Satan’s little helpers” and the “ruiners of all things good,” Hicks insisted he meant it. “I know what all the marketing people are thinking right now too: ‘Oh, you know what Bill’s doing? He’s going for that anti-marketing dollar. That’s a good market. He’s very smart.’

Oh man, I am not doing that, you f\*\*ing evil scumbags!” Hicks snarled.

I can’t imagine any of today’s comics riffing off Hicks’ lethal shtick. Certainly not on college campuses, those no-go zones for trigger-happy stand-up artists. But this isn’t about black comedy *per se*; it’s about the unfunny trajectory taken by marketing and advertising since Hicks’ death from pancreatic cancer in 1994.

Whether it’s estimating the dollar value of “biosphere services” from rivers and watersheds, or the harvesting and selling of personal online data, or the rebranding of a racist reality TV star as a presidential candidate, today it’s all about the commodification of *everything*.

That said, personal branding has leapt from the self-help shelf like a virus from a bioweapons lab, to infect brains young and old. You may be halfway making it and halfway faking it, but that won’t fly many places online. Not if you want to sell yourself like a bar of soap and collect followers as a “guru,” “visionary,” “pioneer,” “thought leader,” or “disruptor.”



In a telling scene in Douglas Rushkoff’s 2014 PBS documentary, *Generation Like*, a group of US students are asked to define “sell-out.” It doesn’t register as an insult to the kids. It doesn’t register at all – none had ever heard it before. The term “sell-out” peaked in 1969 and has been falling ever since, according to Google’s NGram Viewer, which tracks word frequency in books over time. Contrast this with NGram’s spike for “on brand,” which is “something characteristic for the personal image (your brand) you are trying to project,” according to Urban Dictionary.

“Your brand is a perception or emotion, maintained by somebody other than you, that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you,” wrote marketers David McNally and Karl Speak in their influential 1999 book, *Be Your Own Brand*.

There’s irony in the recent spate of articles on how to spot a narcissist, presumably because it’s become trickier to distinguish personal pitching from a personality disorder. Humility, once considered a virtue, is now something of a capital sin against the culture of self-branding. This is personified in President Twitter Thumbs, who won the White House partly through a combination of toxic celebrity and malignant narcissism.

It’s an infectious mix. When Kanye West held his recent White House hufest with President Trump, the MAGA-hatted hip-hop star made an interesting remark. “But at Adidas, when I went in, in 2015, we were a \$14-billion company losing \$2 billion a year. Now we have a \$38-billion market cap. It’s called the “Yeezy effect,” he told the gathered press.

Note how West moves from the personal pronoun “I” to the collective pronoun “we” in speaking of Adidas. It’s

peak commodification when a wealthy branded performer both endorses, and identifies with, the legal fiction of corporate personhood.

Everyone from billionaires to mommy bloggers are in on the self-branding game, leveraging their social media platforms with the zeal of marketing consultants. This includes teens and preteens, who have nothing to flog beyond their online personas.

When 23-year-old fashion blogger Chidera Eggerue advises followers to “go take dance class or start writing a blog or do something that adds value to you,” does anyone’s radar go off? Nope. Using business terms to pitch personal development is old hat, dating back at least to Napoleon Hill’s 1937 self-improvement book, *Think and Grow Rich*. It’s just that this mindset has been turbocharged by neoliberalism, with its philosophy that “the market drives not just the economy but all of social life,” in the words of cultural critic Henry Giroux.

So how did we get here? The expansion of the service and information economies has been, in part, a response to the North American contraction of the manufacturing sector, which began in the seventies with the export of blue-collar jobs to foreign shores.

Hence the rise of the gig economy, which encourages underemployed workers to reinvent themselves as independent contractors.

Following the World Trade Organization’s 2001 membership welcome, China evolved into the default manufacturer to the First World. This allowed First World workers to furnish their homes with cheaper goods, but it didn’t solve capitalism’s internal contradictions. However, it bought the neoliberal system time to blow up more speculative bubbles, privatize public assets, intensify state authoritarianism and foreign wars, financialize crisis (“disaster capitalism”), and ratchet up social disparities. While continuing to plunder the ecosphere, of course.

All of this was well underway while Hicks was still ranting. “A world where greed is our God and wisdom is sin, where division is key and unity is fantasy, where the ego-driven cleverness of the mind is praised, rather than the intelligence of the heart,” as the comic observed.

Economic historian Karl Marx insisted that mass consciousness is conditioned by economic relations, and the information age is no exception. As the global economy unwinds, we are being confronted by a new set of material conditions. And that means a change in consciousness – in both mind and heart.

“Listen,” Bill Hicks said toward the end of his life, “the next revolution is gonna be a revolution of ideas.”



**Geoff Olson**, a BC writer and political cartoonist, is rebranding himself as a curmudgeon. He is also available for children’s parties. [mwiseguise@yahoo.com](mailto:mwiseguise@yahoo.com)

**We’ve so successfully internalized market values, we now actively commodify our own selves. From kids curating their Instagram profiles to adults grooming their LinkedIn accounts, it’s all about presenting a shiny, happy, marketable self to the world.**

We’ve so successfully internalized market values, we now actively commodify our own selves. From kids curating their Instagram profiles to adults grooming their LinkedIn accounts, it’s all about presenting a shiny, happy, marketable self to the world.

I recognize that some self-promotion is necessary for anyone with a sales-worthy service, effective product or worthy cause. Obviously, I’m not about to endorse Bill Hicks’ sarcastic advice as a real-world strategy for me or anyone with an Etsy account. As a freelancer, I depend on advertising revenue for a paycheck.





Universe Within Gwen Randall-Young

PSYCHOLOGY

# Change as a catalyst

*Growth is painful. Change is painful. But nothing is as painful as staying stuck where you do not belong.* – N.R Narayana Murthy

**B**uddhists say that all human suffering comes from one of two things: attachment and the inability to accept change. The problem here is that change is the only constant. We do get attached to people, things, situations and ideas. Sometimes, when change is not of our own volition, letting go can be like trying to get something out of the closed fist of a toddler. Even when we know we should let go, a part of us keeps holding on and resisting the change.

The more we are identified with the old, the harder it is to accept change. A relationship ends and we are no longer part of a couple. Children leave home and we are no longer their caregivers. There are similar losses if a job ends or even for some when they retire.

**Instead of a vast emptiness, we can see the void as an open space just waiting for many new people and experiences.**

Life can be like a series of mirages. That oasis in the desert changes as we get closer. Life situations change as we move forward. Nothing stays the same.

It is easy to feel grief, sadness, hurt or resentment when things change. When change feels like loss, it can feel like there is a void in our lives. We do need time to process those feelings. However, it is important not to stay stuck there or to identify ourselves with the loss.

Like the child who held on tightly to something the mother felt was not good for her to have, when it is gone, it feels like now there is nothing. The child may cry, but something else soon commands her attention.

In a sense, we can think that when change happens, it is part of our destiny and it is time to focus on what is next. Think how often people stay in an unhealthy relationship or in a job they hate because change can be very difficult.


What if change means we are supposed to be starting the next chapter of our lives? Yes, it can be very unsettling if we have no idea what that chapter is about. We cannot hope to start that chapter, however, if we keep rereading the old chapter hoping this time it will have a different ending.

If a friend stops talking to us, maybe that is in our best interest. A job layoff might mean finding a job we like better or meeting some really nice people. The end of a relationship may mean it is time to develop more independence and focus on our own journey.

Think of that void I spoke of earlier. Instead of a vast emptiness, we can see it as an open space just waiting for many new people and experiences. Instead of feeling empty handed, we can see those hands as being ready to receive.

“That is all well and good,” you might say, “but I am not confident and don’t know how to bring new people and experiences into my life.” Fair enough, but maybe you are in this spot as that is the next thing you are meant to learn.

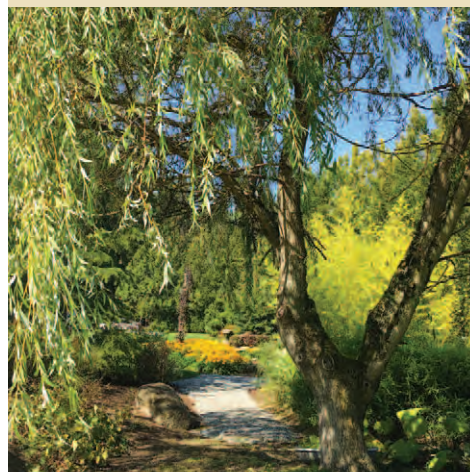
Remaining in a comfort zone stunts growth. We have this one lifetime in which to learn and grow.

It is never too late; we are never too old. Change can be an important catalyst propelling us towards something new. And that is what keeps us vibrant and alive at any age. 

**Gwen Randall-Young** is an author and psychotherapist in private practice. To read more articles or to order books, “Deep Powerful Change” hypnosis MP3s or MP3s for Creating Effective Relationships, visit [www.gwen.ca](http://www.gwen.ca) or check out her Facebook inspirational page.

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Mac McLaughlin

ZODIAC

# StarWise

November 2018

**A** reckoning time is upon us. Yes, it's time to take stock of our situation and, with some determination, truly strive to make some changes, personally and collectively. We have three planets in their own signs, along with a slow moving mid-month retrograde Mercury in square with Neptune. Let's break it down a bit. Firstly, retrograde Venus stations and goes direct motion mid-month in its own sign Libra. Planets that are moving slowly become very powerful. Venus represents love, affection, ethics and morality. Libra is the sign of relationships and all partnerships, balance, justice and fairness. This combination heralds a call to set things right. If you have been pining for that special someone, now is the time to make your move. Bend to one knee, present your token of everlasting love and fidelity and hope for the right response. Of course, we think of love and marriage, but what I'm talking about is to make all things right. How can you better yourself? What will bring peace and happiness your way? Aside from the roses and lollipops, it might be time to call your lawyer and make that appointment to snip the ties that bind. Is it painful? Yes, but as we know, sometimes we have to bite the bullet and make the moves that will help heal the wounds and bring some form of harmony and balance back into our lives.

In essence, it's time to take a long, hard look in the mirror and see what it reflects back to you. Jupiter is in its own sign Sagittarius, bringing a longing for freedom, openness and honesty. Jupiter relates to our higher consciousness and governs the medical, educational and legal systems that help run our society. Politics and all groups with an interest in benefiting humanity fall under his heading. Jupiter in Sagittarius will be on-board for one year and provides ample opportunities to get all of it right or at least on track. Saturn is in Capricorn and, somewhat like Jupiter, he is inclined to the running of business and all administrations. It truly is a time to roll up our collective sleeves and go to work, but before you go to work, do some work on yourself, such as praying or meditating and striving for a cleaner and more wholesome lifestyle. With retrograde Mercury in square with Neptune, it would be wise to go slow till you know. Things can be confusing and muddled with this planetary aspect going on. Think about it, think of the consequences and think some more before you do anything.

**Mac McLaughlin** has been a practising, professional astrologer for more than four decades. His popular **Straight Stars** column ran in Vancouver's largest weekly newspaper for 11 years. Email [mac@macsstars.com](mailto:mac@macsstars.com) or call 604-731-1109.



**ARIES** Mar 21 - Apr 19

You're the leader of the pack and the footsteps you create now will be the pathway others will follow in the future. It probably doesn't make much sense right now, but in a year or so, it will make total sense. Read the introduction as the planets are affecting Aries strongly.



**TAURUS** Apr 20 - May 21

You need to be your own best friend these days. Taurus rarely relies on others in their decision making. You can lower your head and charge at the train coming up the track, but it's not going to get out of your way. Step back and reconsider everything. November is not your best time of the year.



**GEMINI** May 22 - Jun 20

We can recall the truth and rarely remember a lie. It certainly is a time to strive for clarity, especially in all communications. Read the fine print and sign nothing until you have a complete understanding of the ramifications. Dreams and psychic impressions are strong now; pay attention to them. Creativity is at a peak.



**CANCER** Jun 21 - Jul 22

The planets are casting strong glances into your sign. You are a highly sensitive character and a tad attached to those you love, possibly too much so. It might be time to loosen the ties that bind and set yourself free. Clear out the clutter. Say goodbye to what was and what isn't any longer.



**LEO** Jul 23 - Aug 22

There's a little conference going on in the heavens, as the Sun, Mercury and Jupiter join up towards the end of the month. It's likely a revelation or two may come your way. You might be in the mood to re-organize or re-structure certain aspects of your life. Health is number one.



**VIRGO** Aug 23 - Sep 22

You might be right most of the time, but it doesn't give you the right to elbow your way through the crowd. The full Moon on November 22 is hot and it won't take much to set off an emotional storm. This energy carries through to the end of the month. Think twice and respond with kindness.



**LIBRA** Sep 23 - Oct 22

A special grace descends as your ruling planet Venus stands still in her own sign, Libra. Weigh up and sort through what you have to do in order to bring the scales to balance. Sometimes, grace and mercy are not comfortable, as what comes is what is needed, but not desired.



**SCORPIO** Oct 23 - Nov 21

The Scorpio new Moon on November 7 heralds a new start or a new direction. Scorpio is the sign of death and resurrection – out with the old and in with the new. The best advice is to eliminate what doesn't work and move towards whatever will bring peace and contentment. Let go and let God.



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22 - Dec 21

Lord Jupiter returns home for a one-year visit. A busy and opportune time is indicated. Just before you jump on your stallion and head off to who knows where, make sure you have your act together and that you have your facts right and papers in order, etc. Aim carefully, think and rethink your plan.



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22 - Jan 19

"Those were the days my friend, We thought they'd never end." We know the tune. These are the golden days for you. Embrace everything, hug a tree, squeeze the kids a bit tighter and enjoy all that life has to offer. Mainly give thanks for all you have experienced. Pray, meditate and give your love.




**AQUARIUS** Jan 20 - Feb 19

A career shift could be in the works. Plus, you might be feeling antsy or anxious. Venus and Jupiter are casting fine energy into your sign helping you along the way. Your overall fate was decided before your body was formed. Your task is to perfect this incarnation by living to your highest standards.



**PISCES** Feb 20 - Mar 20

Mercury squares Neptune mid-month and you may feel you have lost your way. The best way is to stick to the truth and keep your aspirations moderate and realistic. Mars enters Pisces mid-month and will help embolden you in all kinds of ways. Career opportunities manifest throughout the next 12 months. 

Add spice to your life. Pick the wild one!



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# Steven Halpern

## Balancing, healing music for optimal well-being

by Steven Halpern

lyrics to bring us together in times of tragedy, the emotional resonance of the words represents another aspect of music and has been the subject of many books.

I have been guided to focus on the exploration of how certain sounds can support and empower the innate healing intelligence locked within our cells and DNA. Because this occurs naturally when we're in a state of deep relaxation, most of my recordings are composed with the intention of helping you shift effortlessly and enjoyably into that state. My sound healing music is based on the principles of resonance, entrainment, and intention.

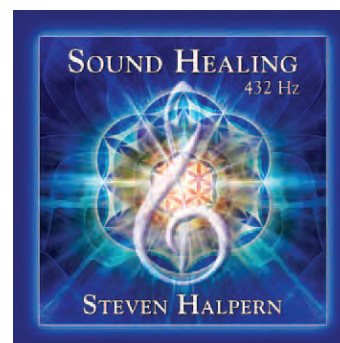
I will be sharing my insights in person on December 7 and 8 at Unity of Vancouver. I invite you to join me in creating sacred sound space together. (See the event details at the end of this article.)

In the early days, I thought this modern application of art and science would be widely accepted as a legal, non-addictive and drug-free addition to the resources we have available to keep us in optimal well-being. I quickly learned that was a naïve perspective because a lot of people and industries did not want this information to become widely known. That was true in 1975 and it's still true today. That's why it's important for each of us to test, for ourselves, whether the claims made by others really work for you.

One of the easiest ways to know if the music you are listening to is relaxing is simply to observe your breath and heartbeat. If you are breathing slowly and deeply, that's a good thing. If the tempo of the music is faster than 60 beats per minute, your heartbeat will entrain to that speed, which is above the range of physiological relaxation, and thus, unsuitable.

Relaxation and the reduction of stress is now proven to be a fundamental building block to health, healing and well-being and a healthy lifestyle in general. For more information, read *The Relaxation Response* by Herbert Benson MD and *Super Genes* by Deepak Chopra MD and Rudolph Tanzi MD.

Most music is not composed for relaxation or healing. From Bach to rock, most music contains hidden stressful factors, built right into the compositional structure of the melody and chord progressions. This evokes an unconscious, analytical response that keeps you anticipating where the music will go next; it keeps you focused on the future. But true relaxation only hap-



pens in the present, in the Now. And that's where the more subtle aspects of entrainment come into play. Our heartbeat and pulse entrain to the rhythm of 'the beat' of most music. On a more subtle level, our brainwaves entrain to the brainwaves of the musician who is playing the music. On some of my recordings, like *Deep Alpha* or *Deep Theta 2.0*, I add an additional level of sonic entrainment tones to


amplify the effect. I consider these as "vitamins of the airwaves" and find, as many listeners also do, that making a conscious choice as to what I listen to can be as important as what I choose to eat.

Now that the concept of mindfulness has permeated our culture, we see a commonality that can help explain the underlying healing phenomenon. To learn more, see my YouTube video *Scalus Interruptus*. [https://youtu.be/-Ml8KiWH\\_1E](https://youtu.be/-Ml8KiWH_1E)

The beauty of choosing healing music is that it works automatically. You don't have to think about it. Here are some key benefits:

- Increased feelings of well-being, happiness and inner peace
- The capacity to fall asleep more easily and awaken refreshed
- A more robust immune system
- Greater concentration, focus, creativity

This last benefit is becoming increasingly important to the millions of individuals who have some degree of ADHD or ADD. Parents and teachers of children with ADHD report significant improvement when they began using some of my albums, as do individuals with adult onset ADHD.

When our body, mind and spirit are aligned and in tune, we feel better. From that inner place of peace, we radiate peaceful vibrations out into the atmosphere. That is, I believe, the greater vision of sound healing and why we need more of it in our world. 

**Steven Halpern** is a Grammy-nominated, multi-platinum selling recording artist, composer, researcher, author and pioneering sound healer. [www.StevenHalpern.com](http://www.StevenHalpern.com)

### EVENTS

#### December 7: Concert

Healing Body, Mind and Spirit.  
7:30-9:30pm. \$25/advance.

**December 8: Workshop** - Empowering Your Life with "Sound Medicine." 1-4:30pm, \$39/advance.

Both events at Unity of Vancouver. Tickets: [banyen.com](http://banyen.com) and [unityofvancouver.org](http://unityofvancouver.org)

**I** first came to Vancouver in November 1976 to be part of the first international gathering of spiritual leaders and seekers at the World Symposium of Humanity. It was a life-changing event for me as it was there that I presented my healing music to an audience that recognized and embraced the new incarnation of a most ancient of the healing arts.

While there, I was invited to present my discoveries at the premiere Festival of Body, Mind and Spirit in London in the spring of 1977, which launched international coverage of the New Age of healing music. Virtually every radio, TV and print interview included the host saying something like, "I've never heard anyone speak about this before."

Forty years later, the context is widely known; millions of individuals are tuning in to various aspects of sound healing. It seems like every day there's another article, website or YouTube video to feed the growing interest. Not surprisingly, in addition to the useful information, there's a lot of erroneous information and opinions masquerading as facts.

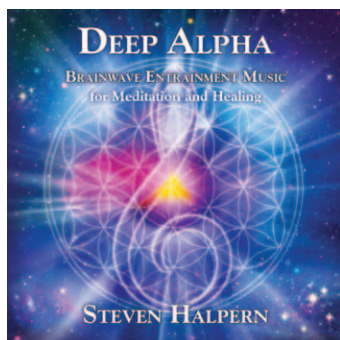
How can you make sense of all of this?

### Insider's secrets of sound healing

What do we mean by 'sound healing' and how can you choose the sounds that work best for you to enhance your life? Here's a brief overview that can help you make more informed choices.

Sound healing is an inclusive term for the use of sound and music to support the natural healing intelligence of our 'human instrument.' Sound healing is not limited to tuning forks, crystal bowls or computer-generated frequency generators; it also includes specially composed instrumental music, chanting and vocal toning.

While I honour and value the power of music with



# When pain shouts, pay attention

by Johnny Frem Dixon

If you try to ignore pain, my friend, it only shouts louder. While other voices call upon you to take care of everything else, pain wants you to do nothing. Stay still; the body has a magic all its own. Pain is a sensation just like hot, cold, wet or dry. Are they good or bad? Pain simply exists, but doctors feel helpless. Drugs can't stop pain, but they can stop doctors' anxiety. Some drugs numb pain – until the drug wears off. Pain has been vilified and many people look for a drug to kill it.



## Perhaps killing pain in the first place wasn't such a good idea.

A roofer I know associates with many drug users in the park where he hangs. He says his friends are dropping like flies and lists a half dozen people I've met. Faces I know. "All dead now. Wasn't always like this. But drugs aren't the same anymore. No borders to cross. It's all from labs: crystal meth and fentanyl are dirt cheap. No cocaine – just a mix of synthetics that produce similar effects to coke. Fentanyl is the main ingredient in heroin on the streets these days so it's easier to overdose. Everyone's switching over to hard drugs. The guys who used to sell pot now sell hard stuff.

Why? Because they can't compete with the pot dispensaries; \$7 a gram in BC. Half what you'd pay anywhere else. But street people don't have ID. Pot stores demand it, dealers don't. And give credit 'til welfare day."

So how did we get to this place of soaring addiction rates? Do a bit of online research: "15% to 19% of Canadian adults live with chronic non-cancer pain... (it) interferes with... daily living, (reduces) quality of life and is the leading cause of health resource utilization... and disability among working-age adults."

In the 1990's, drug companies developed amazing drugs for pain relief, recognizing a potential gold mine. Organizations lobbied state governments for "the right to pain relief," advocating an increased use of opioids, stating they were highly effective and the risk of addiction extremely small. But the studies they cited were for short-term, not long-term use. More details of this campaign can be found in a 10-page article in *Esquire* magazine entitled, *The Secretive Family Making Billions from the Opioid Crisis*. But do you know that the company that makes oxy and reaps the billions of dollars in profits it generates is owned by one family? The Sackler family, owners of Purdue Pharma, even went so far as to offer a patient starter coupon for OxyContin, giving patients a free, limited-time prescription for a seven to 30-day supply: "The first one's free."

I ask my sister, a family practitioner in Victoria, about opioid prescribing today. "Sure, I prescribe pain-killers for post-operative pain," she says. "For childbirth, an IV injection of fentanyl. It wears off quickly and we don't use it near delivery-time. Occasionally, I prescribe opioids for chronic pain – only for cancer patients. But I don't otherwise prescribe opioids. My patients know not to ask me."

"Why not," I ask. She laughs. "They just know they're not going to get them from me. There was a time though, maybe 10 or 15 years ago, when oxycodone was a common choice for post-op pain. We didn't understand how addictive it was. Doctors now realize it just doesn't work." So what do you do? "I refer them to a pain clinic."

I call a friend of mine, Heather Keith, who, along with her husband, a medical doctor, opened a pain clinic in the 1980's, long before pain clinics became recognized by the medical establishment as a crucial component of healing and recovery. "A lot of pain is a dysponetic loop," she tells me. "When you have pain, your brain tells you to tense up. The tension causes more pain, which causes more tension, which causes... We have an emotional response to pain. We shrink away from it."

But the medical establishment was reluctant to endorse their work. Payments were slow. Bureaucracy was skeptical. They persevered. They used several techniques to show people how to manage

their pain using autogenic training, a form of self-hypnosis for relaxation. So now, someone like my sister realizes pain clinics are crucial.

"So we would do some standard progressive relaxation from toe-to-head," Keith explains. "Then some repetitions. After they had learned and practised this technique we would hook them up to a bio-feedback machine – straps around their forehead, jaw, neck and shoulders. With bio-feedback, we taught people to trick their brains into relaxing despite pain. We ran a six-week residential program. Eventually, they all quit their pain-killers."

The first choice of drug for doctors to prescribe for chronic non-cancer pain is now methadone because it's purportedly less addictive. Perhaps killing pain in the first place wasn't such a good idea. We each have a responsibility, that is, an ability to respond. Pain can shout loudly. But, ultimately, we each choose how we respond to pain. I hope we can each learn to listen closely to pain, my friend.

The Chronic Pain Self-Management Program is a free, six-week, patient education program offered at multiple locations in BC: <http://www.selfmanagement-bc.ca/chronicpainprogram>

Johnny Frem Dixon organized the "Bolts of Fiction" reading series for six years and instigated the Vancouver Story Slam. He recently retired from roofing, went back to college and can be reached at [johnny4em@gmail.com](mailto:johnny4em@gmail.com)

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...Andrew Coyne Pro Rep from pg. 9

electoral system, Canadians would suddenly start voting Nazi en masse is just ... well, it's just embarrassing, frankly. I'm embarrassed for the people making it.

Of course, the definition is a bit tautological; some of today's mainstream parties were once considered fringe. The Reform party, the Bloc Québécois, and the Greens all started out on the fringe. Is the present system too "risky," for failing to keep them out?

And who are the parties that now populate the margins? The largest, by far, are the free-market Libertarians and the social-conservative Christian Heritage party – maybe not your cup of tea, but neither one is remotely threatening to our democracy. The rest, Communists, Animal Alliance, etc., not one of them fits the dark, alt-right fantasy the prime minister imagines.

Such parties exist in Europe, to be sure: but we are not Europe, a continent with little experience of immigration suddenly coping with the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees from a war-zone. And even if

extreme or crazy parties got in, they would have only as much leverage as their number of seats allowed. Whereas, under first-past-the-post, Donald Trump won the Republican nomination with 43% of the vote, and won the presidency with 46%.

#### How does it actually work in other countries?

People tend to discuss all this as if we were the only country on Earth, or the first to jump into proportional representation. First, it's the system in use in most of the world's democracies. Not just Israel. Absolutely no one is going to propose any sort of system for Canada that does not include local representation. So if you've been told that PR means we get the system in Israel, you're being fed a line. In Israel, the whole country is one electoral district; the 120 members of the Knesset are all elected at large, from the same pool of voters. So it only takes tiny fraction of the vote to get elected. The whole country is one district because it's a tiny country. We're not tiny. And we're not Israel.

#### How well governed

Look at any list of the world's most successful countries, by whatever metric you prefer – GDP per capita, say, or median incomes, or triple-A credit ratings, or if you find those too limiting, the UN's Human Development Index – and you find the same names appearing. Yes, you'll see the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada. But near the top of every list are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, all of whose parliaments are wholly or partially elected by proportional representation.

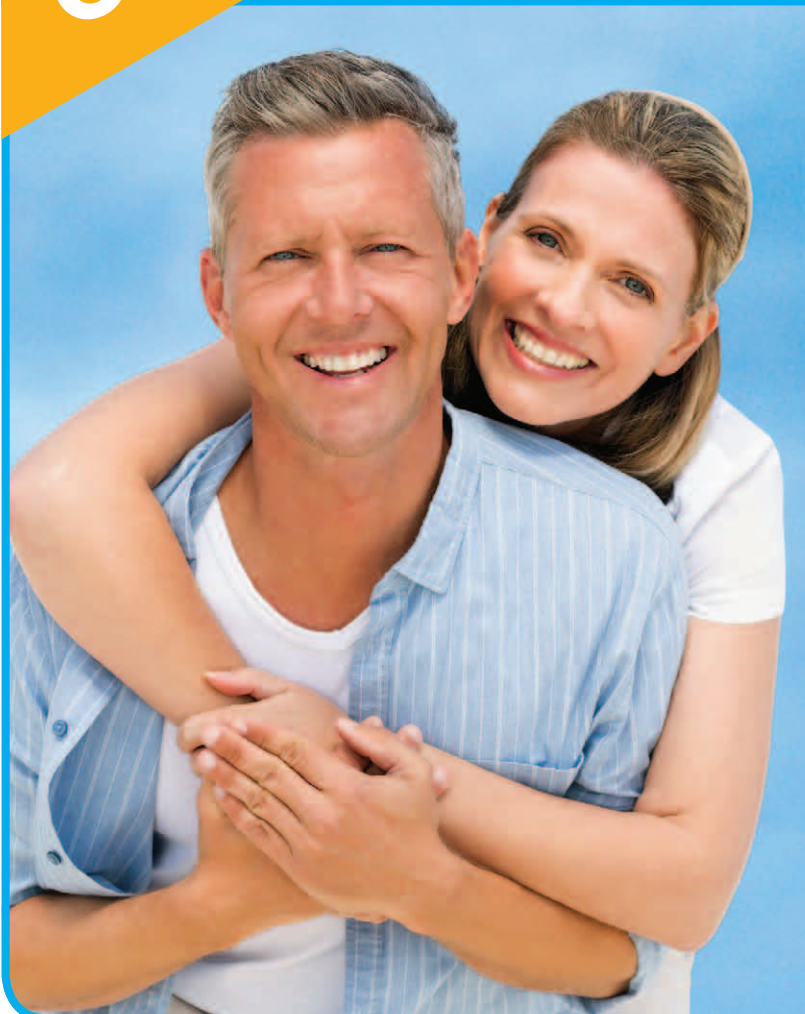
How many parties does one find in the typical PR-based legislature? There's a range, depending (in part) on the size of the electoral districts from which they are elected.

Remember: what distinguishes PR is the use of multi-member, rather than single-member districts. The more members per district, the more closely you can match the number of seats a party gets to its proportion of the vote.

*continued p.23...*

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# Federal parties' exemption from privacy law a double-standard

**C**urrently, federal political parties are exempt from following federal privacy law, meaning that all the standards put in place to ensure that businesses do not mishandle Canadians' data do not apply to political parties. This includes the duty to adopt systems that protect sensitive, personal information and to inform people when their data has been put at risk after a hack. So why are political parties exempt from fol-

lowing privacy law? It is not entirely clear.

While the move to make political parties abide by data privacy laws is supported by Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien, Elections Canada and members of the Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics Committee, a recent opportunity to make it a reality fell through the cracks.

Despite the wide popular support from Canadians, with 72% of people polled supporting the measure, the Liberal government decided not to include this requirement in Bill C-76, the bill that aims to update the Canada Elections Act. The government also rejected amendments by other parties to include these privacy requirements.

Minister of Democratic Institutions, Karina Gould, went as far as suggesting that requiring political parties to have a public privacy policy on their website was enough. This statement was surprising given that one of the stated aims of Bill C-76 is to establish measures that limit foreign interference in Canadian elections to prevent situations similar to the Cambridge Analytica/Facebook data mishandling scandal that took place during the US presidential election.


Privacy laws are meant to regulate the collection, storage and use of our personal data, an increasingly valuable asset in today's digital world and one that can potentially make or break elections, as we've seen with our neighbours south of the border. Therefore, it is irresponsible to let political parties hold themselves to a different standard.

Whether it is creating specific privacy rules that

regulate political parties or requiring them to follow the existing ones (i.e. the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act or PIPEDA), it is time the federal government held political parties accountable for their use and misuse of Canadians' data. With a federal election coming up in the not-so-distant future, we cannot afford this issue to be put on the back-burner.

**With a federal election coming up in the not-so-distant future, we cannot afford this issue to be put on the back-burner.**

There is still some time to put pressure on the Minister of Democratic Institutions to step up and, as her role dictates, put policies in place that ensure the digital health of the players in our democratic process.

OpenMedia has launched a campaign in which you can email both Minister Karina Gould and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to demand an end to the double-standard of privacy for political parties. Make sure to add your voice while there's still time. See <https://act.openmedia.org/PIPEDA> 

**Mariana Ramos Capelo** is a design specialist in the communications team for OpenMedia, a non-profit organization that works to keep the internet open, affordable, and surveillance-free. [openmedia.org](http://openmedia.org)



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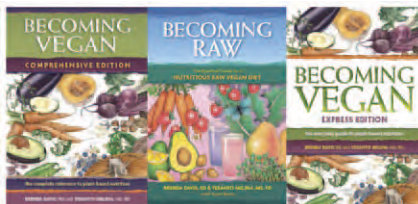
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ENVIRONMENT

# Decisive climate solutions needed now

When our children and grandchildren and those of us still here in 20 years look back to this time, will we say it was when the world finally got serious about the climate crisis? Or will we mark a tragic time when political and business leaders prioritized short-term economic gain over the future of humanity?

Listening to Canada's minister of environment and climate change respond on the radio to the recent Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change report, Global Warming of 1.5°C, didn't raise my hopes... [as] the government representative who should know the most about climate issues repeated numerous debunked and false talking points.

She floated the excuse for inaction I've been hearing for at least 30 years: "We aren't going to get off fossil fuels overnight." She skirted around a question about the climate impacts of burning the increasing amounts of bitumen government plans to ship to foreign markets. She touted Canada's biggest fossil fuel venture – a \$40-billion, foreign-owned liquefied natural gas project – as a "climate solution" because it could replace coal power. That's despite research and advice from scientists about how the project impedes meeting our climate targets, the substantial and under-

reported release of the potent greenhouse gas methane from LNG and fracking, and the fact that LNG is as likely to slow renewable energy development as to replace coal-fired power.

She also repeated the tired refrain of politicians from across the spectrum, that economic considerations are as important as environmental ones...

**The report warns we have about 12 years to act decisively if we are to avoid a dramatic increase in impacts.**

It could be worse [as shown by] the US president's response to the IPCC report: "I want to look at who drew it. You know, which group drew it. I can give you reports that are fabulous and I can give you reports that aren't so good."

The IPCC special report, prepared by 91 researchers from 40 countries and based on more than 6,000 scientific resources, is clear: "Limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society." Temperatures have already risen close to 1 C.

The report warns we have about 12 years to act decisively if we are to avoid a dramatic increase in impacts we're already experiencing: extreme weather events, droughts, floods, rising sea levels, diminishing polar ice and subsequent feedback loops that accelerate warming, and ecosystem collapse among them.

The IPCC report lays out numerous solutions, including "shifting to low-or zero-emission power generation, such as renewables; changing food systems, such as diet changes away from land-intensive animal products; electrifying transport and developing 'green infrastructure' such as building green roofs or improving energy efficiency by smart urban planning, which will change the layout of many cities."

Will we and our elected leaders heed these dire warnings and start facilitating and implementing solutions at the pace required to forestall disaster? Or will we continue to abuse this small planet that gives us life until it's too late? It's time to decide and to hold all politicians to account. ❖

Excerpted from the original article. **David Suzuki** is a scientist, broadcaster, author and co-founder of the David Suzuki Foundation. Written with contributions from David Suzuki Foundation senior editor Ian Hanington.  
Learn more at [www.davidsuzuki.org](http://www.davidsuzuki.org)

# Let peace be their memorial

## A tribute to all the civilian victims of war

by Jim Edmondson



I clearly recall the conversation I had with my Mom and Dad this past July about the laying of wreaths for civilian victims of war at an upcoming event on Remembrance Day. My Dad had an incisive mind and although his stroke robbed him of the majority of his speech, his receptive language soldiered on for 20 years. I picture him now sitting up in bed in their flat in London, England, at 7AM that July morning, sipping his Earl Grey tea and ‘participating’ in the discussion. His eyes were glued on mine and his brain was working hard to formulate the verbal response he knew would never come. But his lopsided smile and sparkling eyes told me he had a lot to say about the civilian victims of war.

As the July sun streamed in through the windows, that morning’s Bible reading – our morning ritual – was about peace. Me, an avowed atheist. Them, strong believers. My Dad nodded and grinned as my Mom and I talked about the Sermon on the Mount. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the Children of God.” I told them about the upcoming event, Let Peace Be Their

Memorial, which I would be singing at. It would take place 7,600 kilometres away in Vancouver on November 11.

Both of my parents are survivors of the Second World War and I know it’s important for them to still bow their heads for two minutes on Remembrance Day and remember good friends in the British Navy and the Wrens who were blown up or drowned at sea. But they were intrigued by this new angle about the overlooked civilian victims of war.

I shared that a group of women would lay wreaths to honour those like Anja, raped by soldiers in wars around the world. Anja was forced to bear her assailant’s child, then was shunned by her own community. My Dad was an intensely kind and moral man and I could see tears coming to his eyes. When he left the navy, he was a Commander and he could have gone into a successful career in administration, as many of his friends did. But he went into the Church, and as a lowly vicar in a small parish, he understood loss and the subsequent overwhelming grief.

The rest of the day as we moved in and out of the conversation, I was

amazed by how much the topic of the civilian victims of war resonated with articles I was reading to my Dad from the *Times*; and how it resonated with an letter from an old naval friend who was with my Dad escorting convoys to Russia over the North Sea avoiding the deadly U-boats coming out of the Norwegian ports.

Later, my mom asked me to tell them more about the other groups who would be laying wreaths at the Let Peace Be Their Memorial event. While my parents could no longer effect much change for the better in the world, they were eager to hear that somebody was doing something, anything, positive. So I read to them from a piece of writing I was working on to promote the event and I reminded my Dad about one of his more impressive sermons. “Ban the Bomb!” he had

admonished from the pulpit 40 years ago. “Keep Britain Great! My question for you today is does the Church give a lead?” He liked to tackle the important issues of the day and embrace dichotomies. And so I shared the following:

“We’ll talk about the wreaths that have been laid here in past years for so many civilians, adults and children damaged in some way or killed by war. Sachi is older now, but like many Hiroshima children, she was playing in her schoolyard when the bomb fell. She survived the blinding flash and black rain, but watched her father die a slow death from radiation poisoning.

“At 12, Fazineh was abducted in a rebel raid, indoctrinated and forced to join an army of child soldiers. She speaks now of the trauma of killing and seeing firsthand others being killed. Tima’s beloved sister-in-law and two nephews were drowned when their overloaded refugee boat capsized. We all have seen the picture of the little boy on the beach at the water’s edge. Rasim, a seven-year old war refugee and Darren a 36-year-old war veteran both lie awake nightly, shaking and terrified from the

effects of PTSD. At 16, Halima was a promising student who planned to be a physicist; a war and eight years as a refugee ended her schooling and dashed her future hopes. A past president of our BC Teachers Federation will lay a wreath for children who have lost their education because of war.”




Attitudes are broadening  
on the focus of  
Remembrance Day. The  
message of peace is gaining  
acceptance in Vancouver  
and elsewhere. Our soldiers  
aren’t the only ones killed  
and damaged by war.

I distinctly recall the expression on my Dad’s face when I looked up. I didn’t need his approval but I had it. If my Dad’s response was anything to go by, attitudes are broadening on the focus of Remembrance Day. The message of peace is gaining acceptance in Vancouver and elsewhere. Our soldiers aren’t the only ones killed and damaged by war.

I didn’t read my parents the whole article, but I did read them the ending: A poem called Ali Ismail Abbas by Daniel Amoss, winner of a U.K poetry contest for children under 12.

*I saw his picture.*

*War is a twelve-year-old boy*

*With no arms, brown eyes.* 

### EVENT

**November 11, 2:30pm:** Let Peace Be Their Memorial

Perhaps you are moved enough by this personal story about my parents to join us at this event. Sachi, Fazineh, Tima and many others will be laying wreaths at this special ceremony. Join us at Seaforth Peace Park (Burrard @ 1<sup>st</sup>) in Vancouver.



# Politics if it's broke, fix it

by Bruce Mason



**S**taying informed about our political life has always induced headaches, varying in severity. These days, the frequency of temple-thumping migraines caused by out-of-control elected officials requires a warning: “Political awareness may be harmful to your health.”

Active citizen engagement – an essential ingredient in democracy – has most often led to heartache. Now, add another common symptom: stomach ache. The unhealthy dog’s breakfast of our sick-making political diet is a smorgasbord of betrayal in which lying is government policy.

Pick your poison: The shameful lack of honesty and accountability in housing affordability and homelessness, historically unprecedented inequality, deceit in First Nations reconciliation, the history-making Mount Polley spill and the big, ugly, gob-smacking, gut-wrenching whopper: Trudeau’s decision to not reform our screwed up electoral system, as promised and promised, but broken, like so many others.

No wonder we hold our noses in the polling booth, dutifully and naively voting “strategically,” with a faint hope and prayer, while swallowing sugar-coated, watered-down, self-serving policy.

Contemporary politics no longer serves people. Civil servants don’t either. And our electoral system should be mercifully put in some special land-fill, so toxic as to be unrecyclable.

Last year’s Trust Barometer – an annual survey by the Edelman firm – found only 43 percent of Canadians trust government, down from 53 percent a year earlier. This is the first time in 17 years that Canada joined the ranks of “distruster” countries, in which more than half of citizens distrust their civic institutions. It’s not unreasonable to expect another 10 percent drop in our forced nation-wide descent into dystopia.

Related to our unprecedentedly sad political state is the fact that a whopping 80 percent of Canadians say the country’s elites are out of touch. Really, no kidding!

Dumb like foxes, Trump, Trudeau, Horgan, Ford, Notley and the rest of our envious ‘betters’ in this sorry political mess have grabbed hold of the brass ring dangled by the filthy rich. Yes, in fact, they completely own and control – of, by, and for – government. And the privileged and entitled assume that we, like them, care only about our wallets and that we can be suckered, so cheaply and easily. Forget the fact that politicians work for us and our common good, or should, and may once again if we reform, or follow, world-wide best practices.

What were once called newscasts are now referred to as “shows.” A massive industry has risen from the cold ashes of once-proud journalism, fund-raising, and honest political campaigns. Money-grubbing handlers and shills intentionally deprive us of access, accountability and accurate information. We are distracted and

conned by fluff, our attention deflected from historically obscene levels of inequality, climate disruption, ever more studies of deadly fish farms, an unnecessary and increasingly expensive dam to flood invaluable farmland, contempt for First Nations, including murdered women, so-called tax relief scams, a tripling – tripling! – of communications staff by former Mayor Gregor Robertson, ties to casinos by another past head honcho at 12th and Cambie, Larry Campbell, or God help us, Gordon Campbell.

Meanwhile, the so-called richest among us not only don’t pay their fair share, but pay virtually nothing at all, except unfair wages.

“Follow the money,” Deep Throat advised those who dug into Watergate. Make that “dirty money,” today. And you no longer have to dig much to see we have hit rock bottom.

If you do nothing else in what little remains of 2018, vote for proportional representation. The system, not just the players, must be fundamentally changed, wrested from those who rigged it for their fit and exclusive survival.

Show up to support proportional representation so your vote counts, now and in our endangered future. ■

**Bruce Mason** is a Vancouver and Gabriola-Island based five-string banjo player, gardener, freelance writer and author of *Our Clinic*.



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**NOV 11**  
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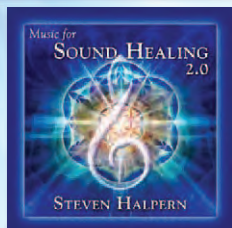


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...Andrew Coyne Pro Rep from pg. 15

So at one end you have countries like Austria, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Sweden, all with six to eight parties represented in their legislatures, or about one to three more than Canada's, with five. At the other, Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands and Switzerland, with 10 to 12. On average, studies show FPTP systems tend to have about two or three parties, PR countries three or four.

How unstable are these systems? Since 1945, Canada has held 22 elections. In only one of the PR countries mentioned has there been more: Denmark, with 26. The average is 20. It is true that the governments that result are rarely, if ever, one-party majorities. But, as you may have noticed, that is not unknown here. Nine of Canada's 22 federal elections since 1945 have resulted in minority parliament

What about the argument that FPTP makes it easier for voters to "throw the bums out"? Where's the evidence? Under first-past-the-post, Canada has had some of the longest-lasting dynasties in the democratic, or indeed the undemocratic world: the 42-year reign of the Conservatives in Ontario, the 43 straight years under their counterparts in Alberta, or the dominance of the federal Liberals for most of the past century: from 1896 to 2006, they governed nearly three years in four.

Was that 110-year period of dominance a reflection of a broadly-shared national preference for Liberal government? Not so much; on average, their share of the popular vote exceeded that

of the Tories by just three percentage points, 42 to 39. Rather, it was on the strength of their ability to cluster their support in one province – Quebec – until 1984, Ontario after that. Again, FPTP at work.

Compare: Since 1945, Canada has changed governments eight times (counting the Joe Clark interregnum as two). Looking at countries of comparable levels of development in the proportional representation world, you find some, indeed, that have had fewer clear changes of power: Austria (three) Germany (four), Sweden (six). But you find as many with more. The citizens of Norway have thrown the bums out nine times in the same period; the Danes, 12 times; the Irish, 13.

## A change of philosophy

What is the purpose of elections? Is it just to find out who won? Or is it to find out what people think? Is the only possible form of parliamentary democracy single-member plurality? Or can we elect several members per riding? Must we only allow a slice of the electorate to be represented in Parliament, or can we have a broader representation, based on the actual range of views in the country? Struck by the fact we're deciding this by a referendum. What right does a party with a mere majority of the legislature have to impose its views on the country? Implicitly, they're acknowledging they want a real majority, a vote of all the people.

First-past-the-post is broke, let's fix it. Vote for Proportional Representation. [K](#)

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